

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV) TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Holiday-Inn Lansing West
7501 West Saginaw Highway
Lansing, Michigan
May 9, 2007

Chairman Ranney called the meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Trails Advisory Board to order at 6:35 p.m. on Wednesday May 9, 2007, in Lansing, Michigan.

Members Present:

Dick Ranney, Chair
Glenn Moll, Vice Chair
Jason Dinsmore
Larry Harrington
Sheriff Scott Strait
John Bernard
Peter Wycoff

Department of Natural Resources (Department) Staff Present:

Lynne M. Boyd, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
James Radabaugh, FMFM, Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, FMFM, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Lt. Creig Grey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Lansing
Lt. Dan Hopkins, LED, Roscommon
Pete Lundborg, Parks and Recreation, Mears

USDA Forest Service Staff Present:

Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Cadillac

MINUTES

Acknowledged Minutes of the February 7, 2007, ORV Trails Advisory Board Meeting.

Mr. Dinsmore made a motion, supported by Mr. Moll, to accept the minutes of the February 7, 2007, Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board Meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Mr. Lewis Shuler, Executive Director, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan thanked the Department for working hard to justify exception to the Executive Directives so the grants could be executed. He also thanked the Department for volunteer agreements that allowed the clubs to get out and work on the trails. He noted high fuel costs have become a burden to volunteers and requested the Department consider increasing the trail maintenance grant reimbursement rates to help offset expenses. He thanked the Department for their consideration.

Mr. Jeff Magowan, UP Sandstormers Motorcycle and ORV Club, Inc. submitted a petition with over one hundred signatures requesting a Director's Order to manage and enforce Michigan's designated motorcycle trails for two-wheeled vehicle use only. He said that despite the Department's different maintenance standards for motorcycle trails (24 inch tread width) and ATV trails (50 inch tread width) evidently there is no ability for the Department to enforce the rules. He said ATVs are

riding on designated motorcycle trails creating undesirable conditions by widening, straightening, and braiding the trails, creating spur trails, and safety concerns. He requested the ORV Board support a Director's Order to restrict designated motorcycle trails to two-wheel vehicles only. He thanked the Board and the Department for their consideration.

Mr. Cameron Habermehl, Alpena County Board of Commissioners submitted a proposal to expand ORV riding opportunities onto the designated snowmobile trails in Alpena County. He noted the loss of industrial economic base and the need to move toward tourism to replace revenue. He said the Alpena County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to allow ORVs to travel on county road shoulders and reserving the Road Commission's right to designate on which roads ORVs would be allowed. He thanked the Board for their consideration.

OLD BUSINESS

ORV Plan Update – **Mr. James Radabaugh, FMFM** reported the Department initiated the planning process in 2004 contracting Michigan State University to facilitate public input, survey counties, and other states, and draft the initial plan. It was a two year process. During the same period Forest Certification efforts began and audit findings concerning illegal ORV damage, enforcement, and education needs came to light. Legislative boiler plate directing the Department to expand the trail system by twenty five percent over the next four years was also introduced. The draft plan was taken to the Natural Resources Commission for information earlier this year and public testimony was taken requesting them to delay action. In March 2007, staff met with Dick Ranney, Sue Thrushman, Pat Brower, Lewis Shuler, and Paul Mulder to discuss their concerns with Chief Boyd. It was decided to take the plan off the Commission approval track at this time, and instead the Department will prepare a more action oriented plan to incorporate the additional inputs. The process will be initiated over the next several months and the plan will be brought back to the ORV Board at a future meeting.

Rapid River Motorcycle Trail Proposal – **Chairman Ranney** announced the Hiawatha National Forest is taking public comment on a proposed 26 mile long motorcycle trail on the Rapid River/Manistique Ranger District. The public comment period ends May 14, 2007. The environmental assessment was funded through the ORV grants program. **Chairman Ranney** noted Jeff Magowan has been working on this project for over six years and thanked him for his dedication.

Mr. Moll presented a draft letter of support on behalf of the ORV board to be sent to the Forest Service.

Mr. Harrington made a motion to accept the draft letter, seconded by Mr. Dinsmore.

Discussion ensued about exclusion of horses on state-designated ORV trails. **Mr. Kubisiak** stated horses are not prohibited on state-designated ORV trails. **Mr. Dinsmore** asked if the trails had to be maintained for horses. **Mr. Kubisiak** said no and that the trails are maintained to the established trail maintenance standards for ORVs.

Mr. Dinsmore moved to amend the letter to delete exclusion of horses, seconded by Mr. Moll. Motion unanimously carried.

Trail Expansion Update – **Chairman Ranney** reported R.J. Witte has collected and digitally mapped over 1,100 miles of potential trail proposals. **Chairman Ranney** proposed sitting down with members of each trail user group to further refine their ideas before presenting their recommendations to the Department and Forest Service. He requested Department and Forest Service assistance in providing regional base maps of the Northern Lower and Upper Peninsula so trail proposals could be

plotted and analyzed at a regional scale. The Department will explore base map options and get back with Mr. Ranney.

Trail Maintenance Reimbursement Rate -- **Chairman Ranney** said there is a need to increase the trail maintenance reimbursement rates because high gas prices are increasing the financial burden on volunteers. He noted this could jeopardize volunteer participation in the maintenance program and that there is a need for immediate relief.

Mr. Radabaugh said this is an important matter that needs further discussion in light of the Executive Directives and noted the need to look at the overall long term future financial implications to the ORV Program.

NEW BUSINESS

Motorcycle Trail Petition -- **Chairman Ranney** thanked Mr. Magowan for submitting the petition and request for a Director's Order to preserve motorcycle only trails. **Sheriff Straight** asked how rescues are made on motorcycle trails. **Mr. Magowan** said to his knowledge rescues have not been an issue since motorcycle trails are designed to be tight and twisty to keep speeds down.

Mr. DeBrabander noted the Department's recognition of designated motorcycle trails. Last month, FMFM's Management Team directed the trail analysts to evaluate the trails and make recommendations to identify trails that should continue to be maintained for motorcycle only protected by Director's Order. The evaluation is ongoing and the program is reviewing draft recommendations.

Executive Directives -- **Steve DeBrabander** reported the ORV grants program was granted an exception to Executive Directive 2007-11 -- moratorium on state grants. All of the ORV grants have been executed and the Department appreciates the patience and efforts of all the grant sponsors. He noted however, the Department has been directed to delay all grant payments 45 days under authority of Act 278 of 1984. This is a state-wide directive and is not specific to only the ORV program. The payment delays will be in place until that restriction is lifted.

Jason Dinsmore added this is a cash flow issue and not a diversion of funds. The ORV fund is constitutionally protected and will be used for the intended purpose.

Truck Video -- **Steve DeBrabander** played a video that was submitted by field staff. The video was discovered on YouTube. It shows illegal ORV operation on state forest lands. The case is currently under investigation. Chief Boyd wanted to show the video because it illustrates a real problem that must be addressed or it could jeopardize forest certification. The video shows a truck operating in an erosive manner on closed roads and wetlands.

Chief Boyd asked for the cooperation of trail user groups to help get the word out that this is illegal activity and will not be tolerated. She encouraged the groups to self police one another and to report violators when observed damaging the environment by calling 1-800-292-7800.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Long Range Financial Plan Subcommittee -- **Chairman Ranney** reported he attended a meeting with the Snowmobile Advisory Committee regarding their long-range financial planning effort and found it to be very beneficial. Mr. Moll and Mr. Ranney have volunteered to be on the long-range financial plan subcommittee for the ORV program. He recommended a representative of the ATV, motorcycle, and truck groups also participate on the subcommittee. Mr. Ranney will provide the

Department with names. It is anticipated the task can be accomplished in four meetings and/or conference calls.

Recreational Trail Grants – **Chairman Ranney** asked when Recreational Trail Grant Applications will be available. **Mr. Radabaugh** said the application notice was sent to field staff last week. **Mr. Kubisiak** encouraged ORV clubs to notify their local trail analyst if they have suggestions for potential projects.

Economic Study – **Chairman Ranney** inquired on the status of the motorized trail economic study. **Mr. Radabaugh** reported the study is on hold due to the Executive Directives.

STAFF REPORTS

USDA Forest Service – **Rose Ingram, Huron Manistee National Forest** reported M-33 south of Mio is being reconstructed and a portion of the ORV trail will be temporarily closed until construction is complete. A temporary reroute will be made. The Forest Service is waiting for additional information from the county on the Oscoda connector project, and waiting for additional information from Iosco County on the M-65 snowmobile project.

Silver Lake State Park – **Pete Lundborg, Parks and Recreation Division** reported the park opened last weekend with a slow start. He reported fee collections were down 62% from last year, but noted reservations for the Memorial Day weekend are booked full. He said the contract for the drain field improvements have been let and construction is anticipated to begin in July or August. The park will work with the contractors to minimize disruptions at the ORV parking area during construction.

Forest, Mineral and Fire Management – **Steve Kubisiak** referred the board to a letter and photographs he received from a resident expressing concern with illegal ORV damage on state and private lands in the Upper Peninsula. He said he was requested to provide this letter to the Board and read several paragraphs noting several sites involve great lakes shorelines and river mouths that will require further investigation by the Department.

Law Enforcement Division (LED) – **Lt. Creig Grey** introduced Lt. Dan Hopkins, District 7 Law Supervisor, Roscommon. Lt. Hopkins will represent LED field operations at future ORV meetings. **Chairman Ranney** welcomed Lt. Hopkins.

Lt. Grey said LED will be focusing on priority violations and noted that most violations are brought forward by tips from the public. He encouraged the assistance from the trail user groups to report ORV violations when they see them so as to not jeopardize forest certification and future riding opportunities. To report violations call 1-800-292-7800.

Chairman Ranney noted the value of the Volunteer Sheriff Trail Ambassador Program and the need for volunteers from the riding community.

Lt. Grey distributed new copies of the Handbook of Michigan Off-Road Vehicle Laws, ORV Safety Course Manual, Course Instructor Guide, and exam. He reported the training materials were developed with input from the ORV Safety Education Workgroup. The Department plans to get the workgroup back together to complete a final review of the training materials and continue discussions on the possibility of developing an Instructor Training Academy. He noted the current Executive Directives may impact the training program.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Ernie Brooks asked questions about temporary trail reroutes near M33 on the Bull Gap trail in Oscoda County. Ms. Ingram will contact the Mio Ranger Station and will get back with him.

Bill Gilbert, Michigan ATV Safety Association said when considering motorcycle only trails it's important to consider that motorcycles can be legally operated on the entire 3,100 mile ORV system. With respect to trail safety he said all riders are responsible to operate their vehicle at a reasonable and prudent speed. He read a statement concerning the ORV safety training program. He is critical of the program. He is concerned about inexperienced instructors, the need for an instructor training academy, and the need for required hands-on training.

Brian Yinger believes a training academy for ORV safety instructors is critical and a hands-on training should be required.

Paul Mulder, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive does not support motorcycle only trails. He believes input from user groups is needed on the long-range financial plan and grants. He expressed concern with the negative comments made about truck and ATV damage and does not believe the DNR has taken a leadership role in ORV management and development.

Steve Gradowski believes more riding areas are needed in southern Michigan to relieve the burden on existing trails. He noted the lack of riding areas in the thumb and cited previous trail closures in Gladwin and Midland counties. He doesn't see how existing ORV trails cause any problems with forest certification.

Mr. Dinsmore made a motion to adjourn, supported by Mr. Harrington. Motion unanimously carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Next Meeting:

August 8, 2007 Lansing Holiday Inn-West

Public Present

Bill Gilbert, MI ATV Safety Assoc.
Bob DeVoe, Great Lakes 4-Wheel Drive
Assoc. (GLFWDA)
Brian Yinger, ABATE of MI
Cameron Habermehl, Alpena County
Steve Gradowski, GLFWDA
Sue Thrushman, ATV Off-Road Club
Jerome Plouharz, Swamp Stompers 4x4
Corey Sanders, ATV Off-Road Club

Lewis Shuler, Cycle Conservation Club
Jeff Magowan
Paul Mulder, GLFWDA
Pat Brower, GLFWDA
Kim Olmstead, Jeep Jamboree USA
Thomas Dunn, AMA District 14
Ernie Brooks
Jim Kunath